(b) The follwing four districts in Karnataka have been selected to produce special bivoltine silk under the JICA project:-

1. Mandya
2. Tumkur
3. Chitradurga
4. Hassan

Assistance to the project is provided by JICA in the form of technology transfer through the services of experts, training of Indian counter-parts/CSB staff and by providing equipments.

(c) Since the project is confined to verification of technology developed in Phase I, it is not expected to bring in additional benefits directly to the weavers at this juncture. After the verification and popularisation of the technology, high quality cocoons would be available for production of quality grade silk.

Focus of Asia Society

1643. SHRIMATI LAKSHMI PANABAKA : Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the three days conference on the focus of Asia society was held on March 5, 1997 in which a number of Asian countries and the Chief Executive Officers of International companies attended the Conference;

(b) if so, the main decisions taken in the Conference; and

(c) to what extent these decisions have been helpful to India?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI SATPAL MAHARAJ) : (a) Yes Sir, the conference was held In New Delhi from 6-8 March, 1997.

(b) The conference, discussed, among other things, the positive aspects of the Central budget presented in February, 1997 and the optimistic prospects for the Indian economy in the 21st century. It also discussed the greater opportunities and challenges of accelerated trade liberalisation for the Asian nations, need for partnership between India and the U.S. to address persisting problems of significant dimensions, Importance of a more involved business relationship between India and China and the significance of forums like APEC. Furthermore, India's backlog in infrastructure development, the slow and inadequate financial market reforms, lack of clear policies and rigid bureaucracy was also mentioned. The conference stressed that for the reforms to be a success, there is a need to provide basic amenities to India's rural population. The role of an enhanced education system and PSU restructuring, and the nee to bring down the high cost of money were additional factors mentioned In the conference.

(c) India's policy of economic reforms Is giving due emphasis on, inter alia, infrastructure development, removal of unnecessary red tapism and growth with social justice.

[Translation]

Currency Branch in Bhopal

1644. SHRI VIJAY KUMAR KHANDELWAL : Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state :

(a) whether the Government have decided to open a currency department in the Bhopal branch of the Reserve Bank of India; and

(b) if so, the time by which this department is likely to start functioning?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI SATPAL MAHARAJ) : (a) and (b) Reserve Bank of India (RBI) have reported that it has been decided to have a fully mechanised Issue Department at Bhopal and necessary steps have been initiated. RBI have further reported that it is difficult to set time-limit for starting the Issue Department.

Hindi in Bank Branches

1645. SHRI JAGDAMBI PRASAD YADAV : Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state :

(a) the number of branches in the A,B,C categories of the Nationalised Banks which are operating and the number Cut of categories A & B branches which perform their 75 or 100 percent work in the Official Language i.e. Hindi or how much work they do in this language;

(b) the position of the work being carried out in Hindi in these banks of 'C' category;

(c) the number of house magazines being brought out by these banks in Hindi, English, Hindi-English and other languages and whether these banks propose to bring out the special issues of these magazines on the occasion of Golden Jubilee Year of Independence; and

(d) whether the modern gadgets in these banks are bilingual and the percentage of the work being done in the Hindi using these gadgets ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI SATPAL MAHARAJ) : (a) and (b) The proforma prescribed by Deptt. of Official Language to monitor the progressive use of Hindi in banks does not contain specific column for collecting information regarding the number of branches of banks where 75 or 100 percent work is being done in Hindi. The data furnished by RBI relates to 'A', 'B' and 'C' regions for the banks as a whole. Bankwise percentage of correspondence in Hind in regions A,B & C during the quarter ended March, 1997 is furnished in Statement-I attached.

(c) Information on magazines published by nationalised banks in region A,B, & C as provided by RBI is furnished